

The Trail of a Traitor

By C. C. HOTCHKISS

Copyright—The Frank A. Munsey Company.

It was hardly a strictly military paper in form, but its meaning was unmistakable. I laid it down.

"I am sorry, your excellency, that I did not receive this in time," I said. "It is not yet too late, sir, providing I can see my way to putting perfect faith in you, captain. I had selected you only after a secret and rigid examination of your character and record. But—"

He was interrupted by a knock on the door and the entrance of a very giant of a soldier. The man appeared frightened as he clicked his heels and saluted.

"Sergeant Kelly," said Washington, giving him his immediate attention. "Yes, sir," returned the Irishman, his eyes rolling as he again saluted. "You will exactly describe the one to whom you delivered the letter for Captain Dressler last night."

The man appeared relieved, and wet his lips with his tongue. "Yes, sir. He was dressed like any man not a soldier, yer honor, an' he had black eyes an' a black hair. He was a surly chap wid a bittin' way about him, an' I told me he was the captain's man, sir; but I thought his hands a bit white for hard work. We had some words be-cause an' an'—"

"Did he show his teeth?"

"Faith, he darnd show his teeth to me, sir."

"How tall was he?"

"He was about the height an' heft o' this gentleman, sir, an'—"

"That will be all, sergeant. Return to quarters."

The man saluted and went out. Washington turned to me. I exonerate you, Captain Dressler, and relieve you from arrest. The man you fortunately caught is undoubtedly a British spy, whom I will deal with later."

A weight rolled from me.

"Draw up a chair, captain," said Washington, resenting himself. "I wish to have a confidential talk with you, the nature of which, if you dislike, will cause you to be hanged with scant ceremony if you are within my reach."

I made no reply, but wondered what was coming as I took a seat by the table.

"Captain Dressler," said Washington, drawing a folded paper from a drawer of his desk and holding it unopened in his hand. "The day before yesterday, Sergeant John Champe, of General Harry Lee's Light Horse Cavalry, stationed at Paulus Hook, deserted to the British in New York, taking with him his orderly book."

"Yes, sir," I interjected, my heart beginning to quicken as I thought I saw my errand.

"You are wrong," said Washington, reading my mind. "He is not to be recaptured. He was prevailed upon to desert by General Lee himself, and at my suggestion, and he narrowly escaped through our lines with his life. Can you guess the purpose?"

"I cannot," I replied, thoroughly puzzled.

"It is for nothing less than the capture of the person of General Benedict Arnold."

"The traitor?" I exclaimed.

"Precisely. He is in New York. Sergeant Champe was given to understand that he would at once receive the assistance of a competent man. He is waiting for him. I have selected you to be that man. I cannot order you to go, but I ask you to volunteer for this errand of the greatest importance. Are you equal to taking the risk—to all that the action may entail—to the obligation of a confidential agent—to the danger of entering the enemy's lines?"

"My God!" I exclaimed, aghast at the prospect.

"It is well to think of Him," said Washington soberly. "I know what I ask—that no greater danger can be incurred; but I am prepared to reward success."

He opened the paper he held and handed it to me. It was a commission in form from Congress, signed by its president, and was for the rank of colonel; but the name of the officer was left blank, as was the place for the signature of the commanding general at its foot.

"I shall fill in your name and place my own at the bottom of this paper, if you are successful," he continued. "I have the right, but it is all the reward I can offer. You will be furnished with money for expenses. Think quickly, sir; there is hardly an hour to be lost."

I was not prepared to answer. "How shall I know, Sergeant Champe?" I stammered.

"On your consent you shall have the secret by which to identify yourself and him. You will have to find him. I believe he has a plan for Arnold's capture. You are a young man, strong, self-reliant, and you have no sin to mourn your loss if you are unfortunate. Your knowledge of French and German will assist you. Come, sir; I would have your answer before long."

When my heart was fairly ripping, and I seemed to be looking into the jaws of hell itself. But I was not alone the abject fear of death

that for the moment held me dumb. Nay, it was then the question of my ability. Could I get into the lion's den unscathed? I would be hanged as a spy, if caught, and I loved life with the fervor of any man of twenty-six.

On the other hand there was a lure to tempt one whose liver was of the proper color. I closed my eyes at the enormity of the proposal. When I reopened them Washington was searching my face with a penetrating gaze; but my mind was then made up.

"I will go," I said. With the decision my heart seemed to steady itself.

Washington smiled then, a peculiar grim smile. "I had little doubt of it, captain," he said very quietly. "You will appear to desert, and your arrest will be the apparent cause of your disaffection. And I can facilitate your getting away."

"When shall I start, your excellency?"

"Tonight, sir—tonight," he returned abruptly, rising and pacing the floor. "Here are my orders. As if you were still tainted with arrest you will at once return to Baskingridge with a file of men and a corporal for the purpose of bringing in your prisoner. On the road, during your return, you will desert. I suggest that you make your way to Elizabethport and cross Newark Bay to Bergen Point. There you must act as circumstances demand."

"And now, sir, remember what I am about to tell you. It would be dangerous for you, a stranger, to inquire for Champe by name; therefore, you will go about New York—in the taverns—on the streets, and among the troops, twirling an oak leaf in your left hand. When Champe sees you he will challenge you with: 'Friend, that leaf should be a laurel; and you shall answer: 'Laurels are not so easily gotten.' That will be all, captain. You will find the sergeant a devoted patriot. Let me see—" He picked up the commission I had, captured. "Your prisoner's name, if this be his, is Lyander Melton, and—"

"Lyander?"

As your betrothed, I protest against your mission. However worthy it may be to spy upon an enemy, it is certainly inhuman and cowardly to commit the crime you anticipate committing. I have learned of your intention from your mother, and I assure you that the wealth you hope to gain will bring happiness to none of us. If you are successful, I shall do more than protest against your success. Agnes."

"You excellency," said I, looking up from the paper, "that man, who ever he is, was a fool to carry two such self-defaming documents on his person. I have no doubt that the crime he anticipated committing was the killing of me. And yet, I do not know the man, had never spoken to him until I shot him, nor knew his name until tonight."

"It matters little," said Washington, frowning at the remaining papers in the wallet. These are of little importance, being memoranda of money's lost and won at cards. Your prisoner is evidently a gay blade. And here is a note of hand signed by a Lieutenant Balfour for one hundred pounds, and due in a week."

As he spoke, something like an inspiration took possession of me; certainly I was far from having any plan as I said, "May I have that note, your excellency?"

He gave it to me without asking my reason for wishing it, and which I could not have told; but God wot that note came high to ruining me, though perhaps it was really my salvation.

"And now, sir," said Washington, "here are twenty pounds in gold. You must make it suffice. The hour is late. I think I will send Lieutenant Struthers back with you to Baskingridge. He will be in front of your quarters within half an hour. Sir, may God be with you."

He gave me a rouleau of money from the desk, then held out his great hand and shook mine, standing as he spoke the last words. A few moments later I was in the open air; the stars were shining, there was no wind, and the camp was as still as death.

Strange, was it not, that as I looked up at the velvety sky I should think of "Agnes," the unknown woman who had protested at the intended crime of the lover she would probably never see again?

CHAPTER V.

A Double Shock.

I think Lieutenant Struthers considered me under a cloud, as we rode away, followed by two troopers; but I do not believe that he noticed (the night being dark) that I had discarded

my uniform for plain clothing. Sure it was that he had little to say to me, a disgraced man, and as sure that I was thankful for his silence, not particularly liking him, and having enough to think about.

It was past two o'clock when we reached Baskingridge and came before M'sieur Ledare's house. There was no light in any direction, and it appeared strange that there came no answer to Struthers's repeated thumps on the door. "Both the Frenchman and his servant are sound sleepers!" he growled, hammering on the panel with the hilt of his sword.

"Nay, then," said I, "there's something wrong in this!" And I laid my hand on the latch, when to my surprise the door yielded easily enough. I entered the dark hall, and the first thing I did was to stumble over the body of a man lying on the floor. At that I raised a shout. A minute later Ledare's old servant, Penton, came down the stairs with a light, he being but half dressed, and then I saw that the body was that of Ledare himself. He was stone dead, his skull having been split by a blow of the heavy fire-tongs lying near him.

I knew the rest intuitively, and it was soon fairly proved. Ledare had been killed by the prisoner, who had gone; and gone, too, were my old master's shoes, for he lay there unshod and wailing in his own blood, murdered by the man who had it in his heart to murder me.

I cannot express the shock I felt at this discovery; for the time it unmanned me, and made me forget the importance of my own errand; but I did not forget for long.

How the little village was aroused, how confusion and speculation ran wild, becomes no part of my story, for I marked but the beginning of it. In the running to and fro of the people, and the many questions hurled at Struthers, I saw my chance, and quietly slipping a leg over my saddle as quietly made off while it was yet dark, and I was not missed until some two hours thereafter, and then not a soul knew in what direction I had gone.

I could have laughed at the ease of my getting away, only between what was before me and the fact that poor Ledare was a corpse, I was in no mood for mirth. Moreover, Lyander Melton if that was his name, was free. That fact bothered me but little, however, as I did not see how he could finally escape. As for myself, I knew I would be at once branded as a traitor and searched for, and that in the circumstances, any man knowing he might shoot me at sight. Few are ever lost as I was then.

As the crow flies, Elizabethport, then containing hardly a dozen houses, lies about twenty miles due east from Baskingridge, and for the most part the road is good. But it was hopeless for me to attempt to get there that night, so, after going nearly half the distance, hearing no pursuit, and not meeting a soul, I put up in a piece all that day lay at a distance from the thick woods just as dawn came, and roadside with only water for my stomach, so that at evening I was in a bad way for lack of food. I marked a number of troopers passing, some riding in haste, and farmers with their loads, but none came nigh me, and when the sun was well down I took to the highway once more.

It was black night when I passed through the hamlet of Elizabethport and went on over the boggy meadow that stretched away like a vast plain, until I at last reached Elizabethport; and by then I was fagged out and depressed.

With a feeling of desperation born of emptiness, I stopped at the first house I came to, it lying on a little rise of ground by the water, and being apart from any other dwelling. And here I met with a man who was a mighty good patriot, as I soon learned, and he received me civilly enough. He took me in after eyeing me sharply, and gave me food enough to have satisfied a giant, he sitting by and eyeing me as if in wonder at my appetite. When I had finished eating, and felt like a man again, I turned to my host.

"Sir," said I, "I have reason to believe that you are a waterman."

"I am," he said, puffing on his pipe. "Then there is one more favor you can do me; but first, are there any British on Bergen Point?"

"I think not," he answered; "but their devil patrols prowl around the bay at times."

"I must risk them. I wish to go to Bergen Point. I will pay you well to take me across."

"For what?" he asked, and I thought his expression peculiar. "I like not the idea. I've been caught and looted once by the British patrol boats. If I go, it will be by daylight, when I can see a sail. What can a gentleman want at Bergen Point?"

"I go," said I, lying with ease, "to see an old aunt, who is very sick."

The man opened his eyes. "Ye may mean Mistress Betsy Brothwell," he said, pulling hard at his pipe.

I welcomed the suggestion. "It is the very old woman—and it is a pound in your pocket to take me over."

But nothing I could say would move him to sail before dawn, and I, chafing at the delay, but really in no hurry to thrust my head into a noose, appeared to be content. However, I had too much wit to go to the bed he offered me, being a trifle suspicious of the man and his manner, and so sat up by the fire all night, even getting up and following when he went to look at the weather; for he did not offer to go to bed while I remained out of one, though his wife and two little ones went to sleep in the loft above.

When at last dawn blushed on the horizon, and the moon moved down to the shore, he took an old telescope with him and scanned the broad water of

NEW COLLECTOR OF PORT



BYRON R. NEWTON

Byron R. Newton, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, who stands high in the opinion of Secretary McAdoo, is to be the next Collector of the Port of New York.

Newark Bay ruffled by a light west wind. Not a boat of any kind showed in the distance; the way was clear.

"Are ye armed, sir?" he asked, as he got ready his boat, the canvas of which was the color of tan. "Ye might need an arm."

"I haven't so much as a pistol, being a man of peace," I returned; and at that I noticed he spat violently into the water and became somewhat cheerful. "Well, sir," he said, "I guess I'll put ye through with little trouble."

"I hope so," said I, not then knowing his double meaning.

We went aboard, and all passed well until we were in the middle of Newark Bay, the width of which I do not know, and then I noticed that we were bearing far to the north, and I thought the rising tide was carrying us up. I was becoming a trifle nervous, too, cause I realized that my horse might betray me if any searcher found it, and the longer I was on the water the greater the risk of being overtaken and caught. I looked at the man, who sat with the long tiller held under his arm, his right hand thrust into his coat. "My friend," said I, "I suppose you know your business, but you will never get me to Bergen Point in this way."

And then came the thunderclap.

"Fore God! I never intended to, ye damned deserter!" he exclaimed, suddenly throwing open his coat and pulling a great pistol from his breeches band.

(To be Continued.)

SHRINKAGE OF GRAIN IN DRYING

An excessive amount of moisture in corn is the principal cause for its deterioration during storage. The amount of moisture is therefore one of the chief points considered in grading corn, especially for export.

In the effort to find an accurate and practical method of determining the amount of moisture in grain, the United States Department of Agriculture two or three years ago devised an apparatus by means of which the moisture can be accurately shown in from 20 to 25 minutes. In using this apparatus the amount of moisture is expressed in percentages of the original weight of the grain.

For instance, one sample of corn may have only 11 per cent of moisture, while another may have 35 per cent. Naturally the drier grain is worth more than the other, other things being equal.

But since this apparatus has been put into use disputes between grain merchants on one side and elevator men and operators of grain driers on the other have become more pronounced. The trouble is that the percentages of moisture shown by test before storage or before drying does not correspond with the actual loss of weight which results from storing or from drying. There is no real difficulty in this fact; it is a simple matter of arithmetic.

Suppose a certain sample of grain weighs 100 ounces, and the moisture in it is 20 per cent, or twenty ounces. Now, suppose the grain is dried until it weighs only ninety ounces. That means that ten ounces of moisture have evaporated, leaving ten ounces of grain. The grain has lost 10 per cent of weight but the percentage of moisture has been reduced only 8.9 per cent, because ten ounces is 11.1 per cent of ninety ounces. It, therefore, seems as if the shrinkage in weight has been greater than the reduction in the percentage of moisture.

A simple calculation in arithmetical proportion will show the reduction in percentage of moisture when the shrinkage in weight is known, or vice versa. This calculation is explained in circular 32 of the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture, entitled "Moisture Content and Shrinkage in Grain." The circular also gives elaborate tables by which the figures may be learned at a glance, without the necessity of calculating.

The department is also at work devising a portable electrical apparatus by means of which it is expected that moisture in grain may be determined in the car in two or three minutes. But this method also expresses the moisture as a percentage, and, explanations made in circular 32 will be useful with it also.

The Heart of Motordom

THE LARGEST REBUILDERS OF USED CARS IN THE COUNTRY. Don't fail to see the most complete line of USED CARS, which we have in stock at the present time. Read below the special values offered for the next two weeks:

MODEL 83 1916 OVERLAND, winter top, just what you need in the Country to keep warm and comfortable. \$600.00

86 TOURING driven by one of our Factory Officials, you can't tell it from a new car, holds 7 people, we have priced this at \$700.00

75 ROADSTER, just the car to take your sweetheart out in on Sunday, just been repainted and refinished, we are only asking \$500.00. Don't wait until somebody else beats you to it.

1917 WILLYS-KNIGHT COUPE. Here is the car Father has been telling Mother he would buy, when he got a bargain. This Coupe was bought by a Factory Official and was transferred West, which necessitated his selling it before he ever drove it. He had a heater and fire extinguisher installed. We can sell this for \$1200.00

1915 COUPE has been driven by Toledo Manufacturer from Home to Office. Had excellent care. We can sell you this car for \$600.00

THINK OF BUYING A 1915 CHANDLER 6 for \$650.00. We have one so don't put off coming to Toledo another day.

A soldier boy went to war and left his 1915 85 Roadster with us to sell. He told us to price at \$800.00 to move it quick. If you want a Roadster don't let this bargain get away from you.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW of the wonderful values that we can show you. Let's take the whole bunch and go to Toledo and buy the car we have been talking about so long. We will meet you with a welcome hand—and you will be glad you got acquainted with us.

Willys-Overland
Incorporated

14th and Adams Sts., TOLEDO, O.

Open Evenings

Send for Used Car Bulletin.

DOGWOOD IS ABUNDANT.

Plant Might Be National Flower of United States.

If the United States were to choose a national flower it might well be the dogwood. In the spring, from Maine and Minnesota to Florida and Texas, it lights up and beautifies the countryside with the abundance of its white blossoms.

Even the most unobservant know it in the spring, and no one seems able to resist the temptation to break off the blossoming branches and carry them home.

The result of this practice is that the dogwood is disappearing from many woodlands. This is the more general, because, although it is generally too small for saw timber, its fine hard wood is used in making toothpicks and skewers, and its bark has a medicinal value.

The Ruling Passion.

"Be as light as you can on me, judge."

"Twelve months."

"Couldn't fix it so I could be out in time to see the world series next year?"

Easy to Sweep.

"What is that?"

"A roundhouse. Seems to interest you."

"It does from a housekeeper's standpoint. I have often dreamed of a house like that. No corners to hide dirt."

FREIGHTING A STEAMER.

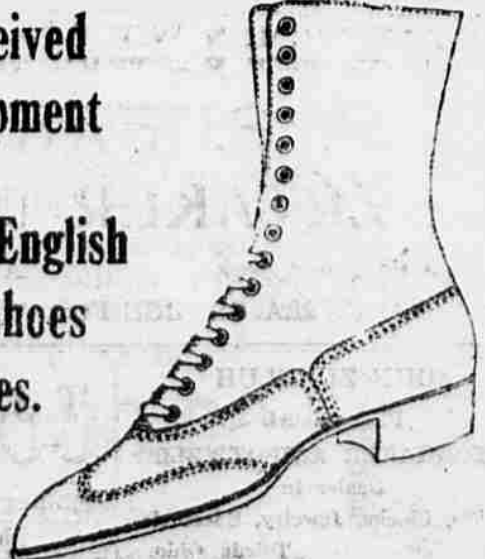
It Now Can Be Done by Marine Elevator.

A marine elevator which enables a vessel to be loaded at any time or tide, which doubles the normal rate of the loading and which reduces expenses a corresponding amount is now being introduced all along our coasts. Formerly a coast steamer had to wait for a tide to come in before she could steam up to the loading dock. Then the cargo was either hauled up by the ship's derricks piece by piece, or it was run up the gangway by the truck load.

But with the elevator designed by Harry Barlow of Seattle, Wash., an entire platform of material can be quickly carried up to the vessel's deck at once. And if the tide is out, the light sound boat carrying the elevator steams from the dock to the vessel anchored near by.

A small electric motor mounted on the top of the elevator structure furnishes the power for the half dozen cables used. The motor controls are placed at any point that affords the operator an unobstructed view. After the operator has brought the platform to the level of the loading dock, the filled platform can be easily raised up to the deck the largest steamer. Level trucking is thus afforded in place of trucking up or down steeply inclined gangways. This fact makes the elevator indispensable for loading explosives or fragile wares.

Just Received
a Big Shipment
of
The New English
Walking Shoes
for Ladies.



At a Saving of \$2 to \$3

You will appreciate these boots at our prices. Beautiful new designs in kid, two-tone effects, in button and lace. Come in tomorrow.

Men's Styles at \$4 to \$7

Newest shades of brown and tan, in button or lace—to suit you—buy here and save.

Wood's Boot Shop

416 Adams Street. TOLEDO, OHIO